

REMARKS

Claims 12, 18, 21 and 24 to 27 have been amended. Claims 12 to 29 remain active in this application.

Claims 24 to 27 have been amended to overcome the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

Claims 12 to 14, 17, 19 to 23, 26, 28 and 29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Cohen et al. (U.S. 5,530,293). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 12 requires, among other features, the steps of applying a planarizing dielectric layer on top of the semiconductor device and the metal layer; and then providing a hydrogen treatment until hydrogen diffuses throughout and substantially saturates the semiconductor device. No such steps are taught or even remotely suggested by Cohen et al. Cohen et al. provide the hydrogen for an entirely different purpose and, more importantly, do not diffuse the hydrogen throughout and substantially saturating the semiconductor device. This treatment will either pacify any dangling bonds in the semiconductor device to prevent damage to the gate oxide layer or cause the hydrogen to bond with contaminants, thereby making the contaminant too large to diffuse through the semiconductor device. No such treatment is taught or even remotely suggested by Cohen et al.

The above feature is also found in claim 21. In addition, claims 13 14, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 26, 28 and 29 depend from one of claims 12 and 21 and therefore define patentably over Cohen et al. for at least the reasons presented above with reference to claim 12.

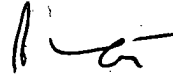
Claims 21 to 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Mora (U.S. 4,920,077). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

With reference to claim 21, the argument presented above with reference to Cohen et al. applies as well in this case and is incorporated by reference. Claims 22 and 23 depend from claim 21 and therefore define patentably over Mora for at least the reasons presented above with reference to claim 21.

The allowability of claims 15, 16 and 18 is noted with appreciation.

In view of the above remarks, reconsideration and allowance are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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